

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
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During the course of a police officer's career, it is likely he or she is able to share many stories regarding calls and other interactions with the public. One of many duties an officer is assigned to is traffic enforcement, which certainly can be classified as a public interaction. Although no motorist looks forward to the opportunity to interact with police while driving a motor vehicle, most agree traffic enforcement is a necessity. Without traffic laws, our highways and byways would be even more dangerous than they already are. Over the past few years, police agencies have been working with various community partners to promote traffic education, as an alternative to just issuing tickets. The combination of traffic enforcement and education has been very successful in our City as well as others across the Commonwealth.

Upon making a motor vehicle stop, a police officer is apt to hear just about anything as an excuse. Being late, oversleeping, the desperate need to use the restroom or getting lost are a few common excuses for a speeding motorist. Today, however, there is a new emerging, thanks to the popularity of technology. The Global Positioning System, or GPS, has truly become the scapegoat for many improper turns, rear-end collisions and restricted vehicle violations. The reliance of listening to the GPS, instead of watching posted signs, has resulted in a few citations, warnings and even crashes.

The GPS has been blamed for "telling" drivers to make a sharp left turn on South Hampton Rd at the intersection of Market St., disregarding the yield sign, making a left turn from Friend Street onto School Street, on the wrong side of the rotary and taking a left turn onto Route 110 from Rocky Hill, despite the "right turn only" sign. The best stories come from the area around the closed Hines Bridge. Despite a number of detour signs, motorists still insist their GPS wants them to cross the bridge to get to Newburyport. The GPS is a great innovation but should only be used to assist with driving; motorists still need to watch the posted signs. After all, no one learned to drive by using a GPS.

In closing this week, I would like to extend congratulations and a sincere thank you to Master Sergeant George Little of Amesbury, as he retires tomorrow after thirty-two years-service with the United States Air Force and NH Air National Guard. Aside from his dedication to serving our Nation for 32 years, Sgt. Little has been a tremendous supporter and contributor to our community. By volunteering at countless community events, George has been helped to promote safety, help the less fortunate and even fight cancer. Whenever I need help, George and his wife Lisa are the first the sign up.

Many years ago, we signed up to join the National Night Out Program to encourage community and police partnerships. As part of the effort, we organized the annual Car & Truck Show, featuring various vehicles of all shapes and sizes. I could always count on George to bring the coolest vehicle to the show; including an airport fire truck, tower truck and decontamination unit. When it came to outdoor events, weather was never a concern for George. In fact, he would put the "survivor" people on TV to

shame with his ability to deal with the changing New England weather. As we were roasting on an August evening at a Night Out, he would break out the fans to spray a light cooling mist across the crowd. If we were freezing at the November Fill a Cruiser with Food, he'd break out the portable heaters to warm volunteers up.

I actually found a comment from George that was published in an Amesbury News article from August 6, 2004, written by former Editor Dave Rogers. George said he participated in the Night Out to remind civilians the National Guard was part of the community. He remarked "we don't want people to look at us and say our only job is to go to war." George is a shining example of the term "community;" working together to make our cities safer and better places. It's people like George who quietly work every day to keep us safe in this crazy world. Certainly there are many problems in our Nation today but we absolutely live in the greatest Country in the world, thanks to our dedicated men and women serving in the armed forces.

Of course, since George will have a bit more free time on his hands now that he's retiring, I may have another community assignment or two for him. Thanks Master Sergeant George Little for your support, dedication, commitment and friendship. You are one of the reasons why our community and our country are the best.